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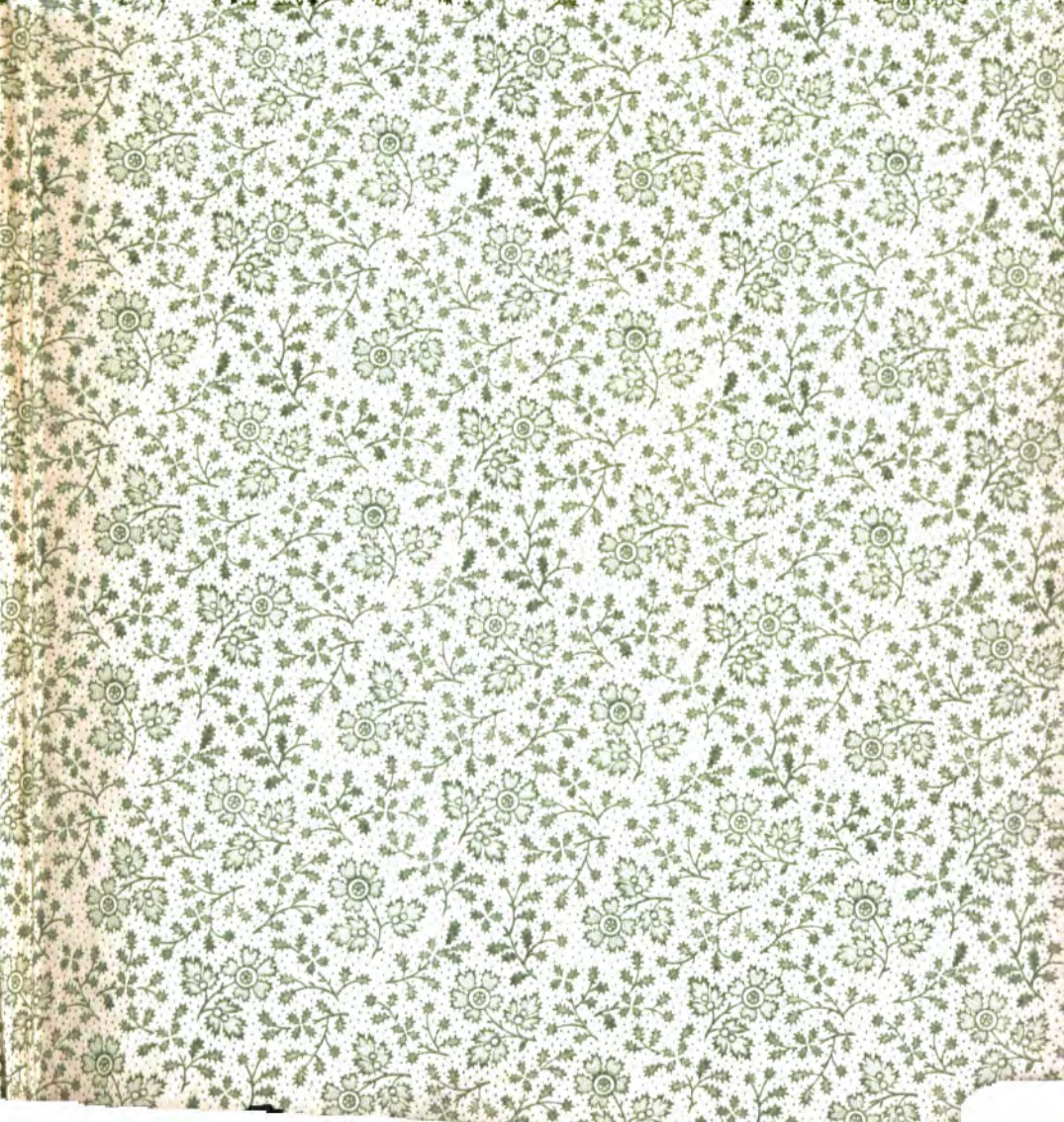
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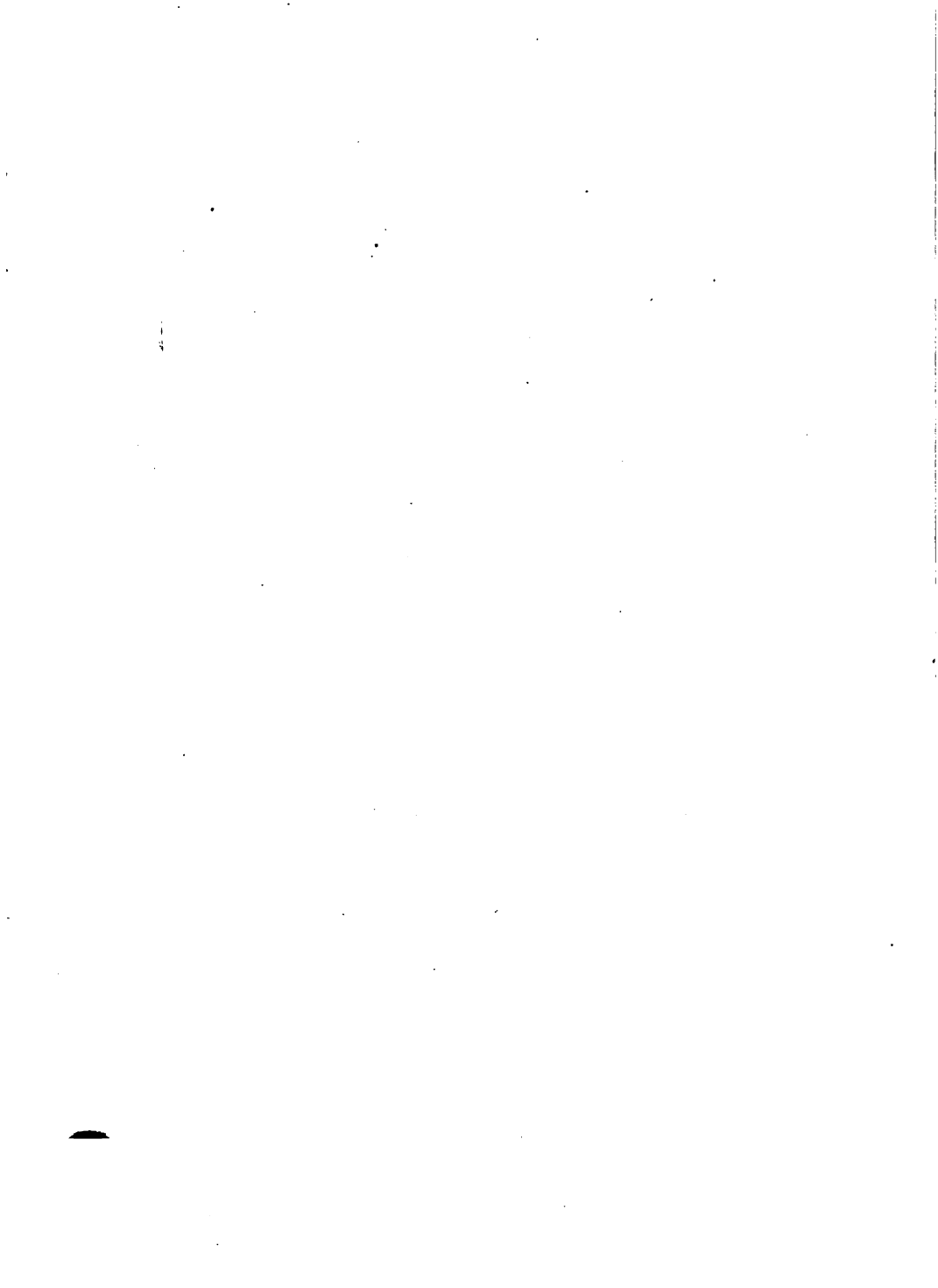
Easter Greeting from

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THE SIGNAL BOYS OF '75



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THE
SIGNAL BOYS OF '75

A TALE OF
BOSTON DURING THE SIEGE

BY
JAMES OTIS

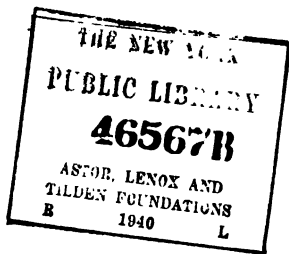
AUTHOR OF "JENNY WREN'S BOARDING-HOUSE," "JERRY'S FAMILY,"
"THE BOYS' REVOLT," "THE BOYS OF 1745," ETC.



Illustrated

BOSTON
ESTES AND LAURIAT

1897



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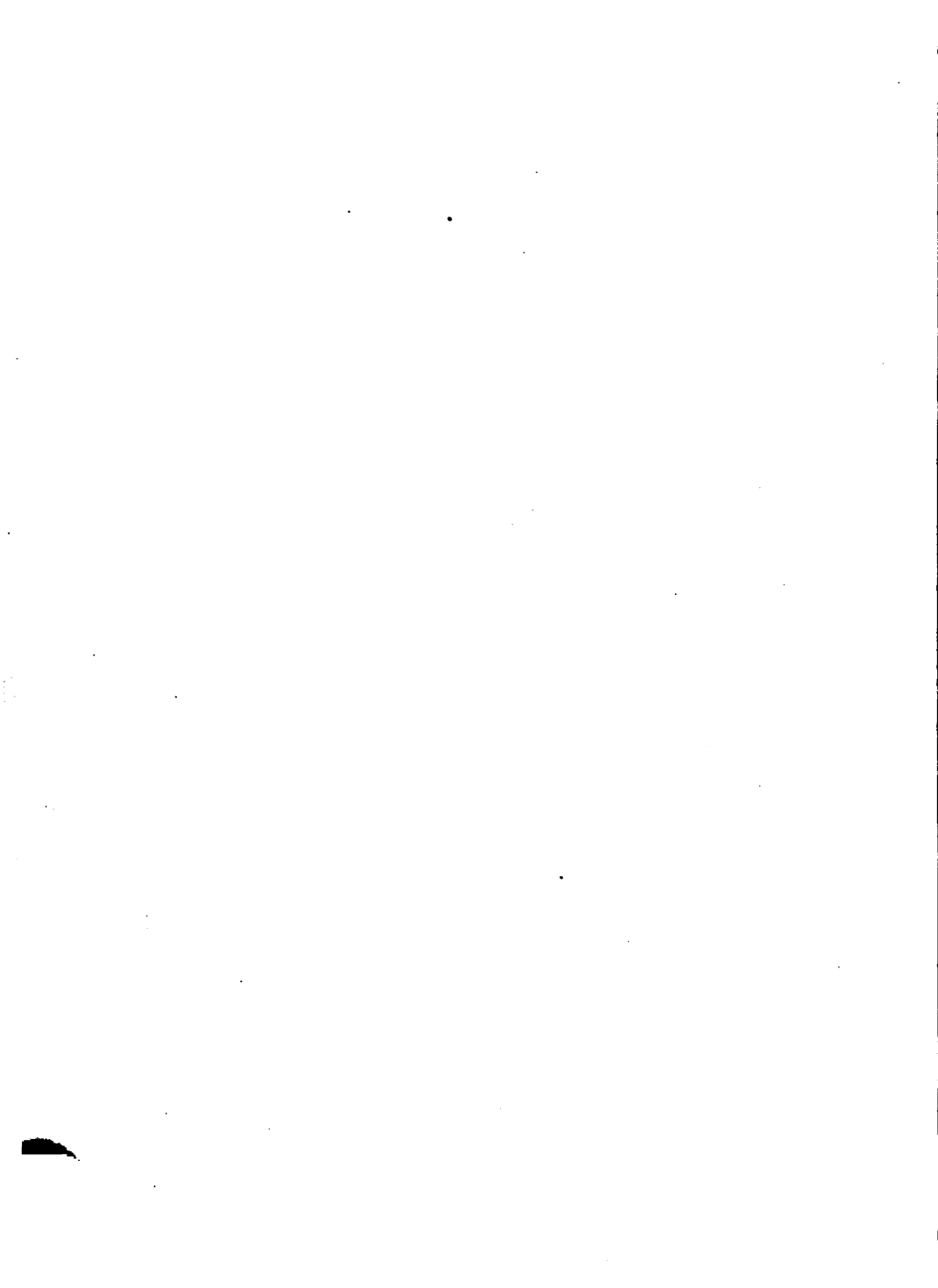
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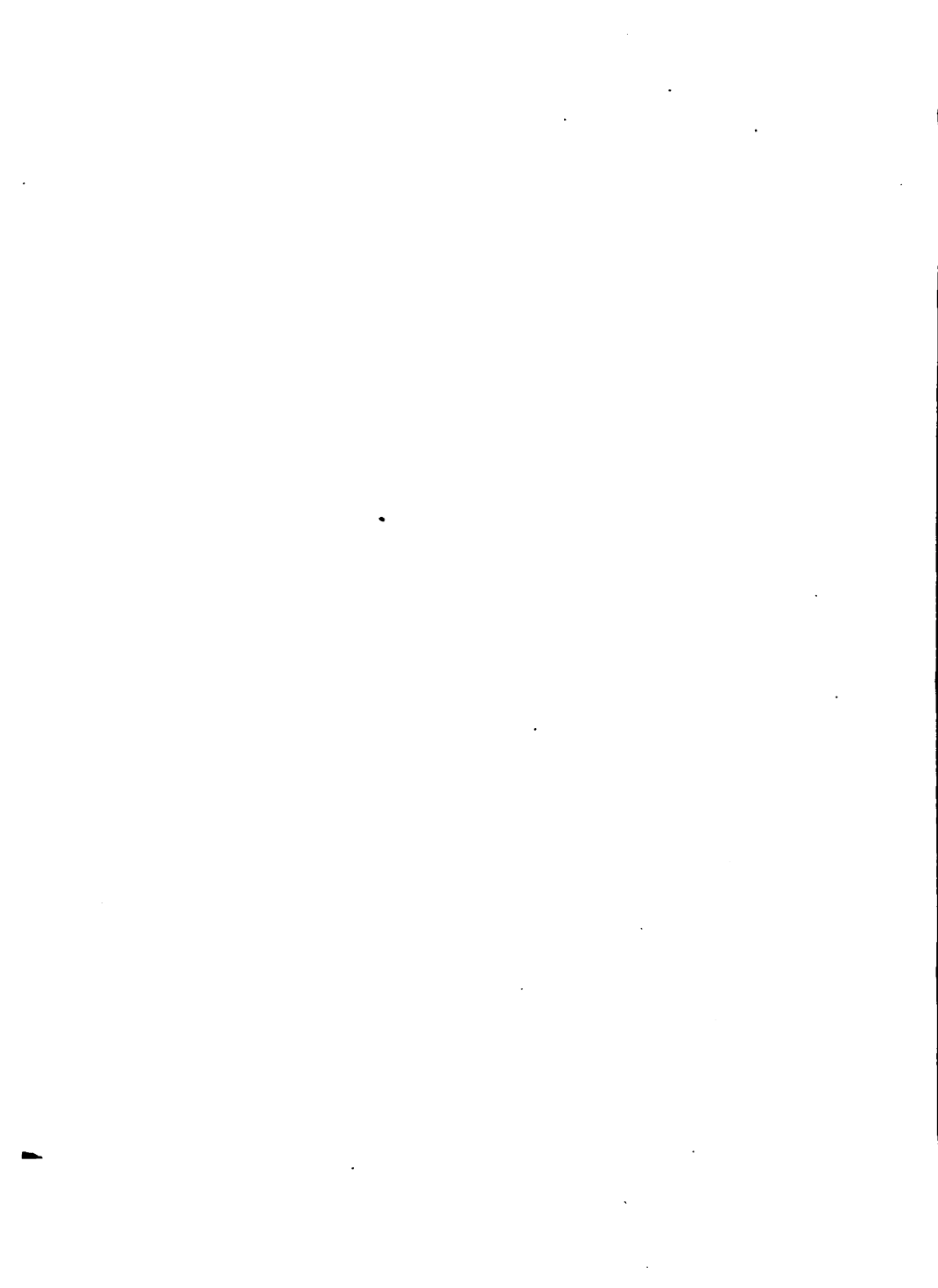
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THE SIGNAL BOYS OF '75

A Tale of Boston During the Siege

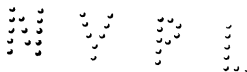
CHAPTER I.

THE MESSAGE.

ON a certain July night in the year 1775, a boy crouched in an attitude of expectancy at the foot of West Hill, on the outskirts of Boston town, gazing over the water in the direction of the Cambridge shore.

The elevation of the land prevented him from seeing the lights of the town only a short distance away, and on that side of the water-front was neither boat nor vessel to be seen.

The lad was alone as if on an uninhabited island, but yet afraid of being seen, as might have been told from his movements when the night wind sighed more loudly than usual through the foliage, or a fish leaped in the water, for at these sounds he never failed to make his way



further into the shadow, and once, when the noise of pattering feet caused by some belated animal was heard, he glided noiselessly into the thicket to hide himself.

Then, when all was quiet, he ventured out again, still gazing in the direction of the American camp, where General Washington of Virginia had but just begun his work of shaping raw recruits into a disciplined army.

One by one the hours passed until the watcher on the shore cast anxious glances towards the eastern sky, as if fearing to see signs of coming dawn, and the blackness of night had already taken on a gray tinge when a faint sound as of water rippling in the distance caused him to make his way once more out of the thicket.

Then a dark smudge in the distance appeared, assuming more definite shape each instant as it approached the shore, until the watcher made it out to be a boat, rowed by a lad of about his own age.

"You have come at last, Amos Richardson," he whispered, in a tone of deepest relief. "It was in my mind that some ill fortune had befallen you."

"Had I thought you might be waiting for me, Jim Gray, I would have made more haste. Why are you here?"

"To make certain you returned in due season, and prevent you from showing yourself near about Province House by daylight."

"And why may I not go there?" Amos asked as he stepped from the boat and stood in the faint light of the new day, a sturdier lad than when he aided in placing

the warning symbol in front of Master Theophilus Lillie's shop on Hanover Street, and as much more manly in appearance as might be expected of a boy who had grown older by five years.

"One of Lord Percy's officers stopped Hardy Baker near by the Town House yesterday morning, and asked concerning you."

"To what purpose?"

"We know not; but it is said among those friendly towards us, that our doings last week in the steeples have been made known; that our rightful names are set down as Signal Boys, and his lordship has it in charge to prevent us from continuing such work."

"If he has our names it matters little whether we present ourselves in this particular part of the town or that, for should it please General Gage to send one or all to the Bridewell, the task of finding us would not be difficult."

"Unless it so be we passed over to Cambridge, and there remained. Hardy Baker believes such a course is the safest."

"Hardy Baker as a Signal Boy is much the same lad as when apprenticed to Master Piemont the barber; ever timorous and having little relish for dangers which menace his own precious body."

"Then you are not minded to enter the army?"

"We can better serve the Cause here, sending out our signals when it be necessary, than there, where we could do no more than practise at being a soldier. Is it to

your mind, Jim, that we leave town simply because his lordship has our names?"

"If it so be we can accomplish more here, Amos, then I would stay, for now has come the time when I may do some little towards avenging Sam's cruel death."

"We will remain so long as it may be possible to keep out of Lord Percy's clutches, and in the meantime we have much work to do. I have promised that from the West Meeting-house this coming night we will send word as to whether the ship which was off Nick's Mate yesterday be a war vessel or transport. Know you anything concerning her?"

"I have not been on that side of the town since you left; but remained near about the ropewalk until Hardy came last evening, when we ventured on the Common, making our way through the streets in most humble fashion, lest by doing otherwise we incur the displeasure of the red-coated swaggerers."

"And you learned nothing new?"

"We met Chris Gore¹ on Common Street, who told us his father had heard that General Gage proposed to cut down the Liberty Tree."

"Cut down the Tree? Surely the Britishers would not dare do that?"

"But what should prevent them? They are masters in this town, and who may say them nay?"

"Ay; but why attack a tree simply because beneath

¹This is Christopher Gore who, in 1809, became Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

it the Sons of Liberty have held their meetings? As well pull down the South Meeting-house for what Doctor Warren has said inside its walls."

"It may be, Amos, the words were spoken only to anger us, and we will hope they were used simply for that purpose. Now tell me of Cambridge. Whom saw you there?"

"First, Colonel Daniel Morgan, who is in command of the Virginia sharpshooters, the man who received five hundred lashes by the order of a British officer, was shot through the neck by an Indian, and yet escaped — a most gallant fighter, as I am told; Colonel John Stark from New Hampshire, Colonel Benedict Arnold of Connecticut, General Nathaniel Green from Rhode Island, and the bookseller, Master Henry Knox, who is now become a colonel of artillery. Those were the officers pointed out to me by name; but of course there were many others, and it was a brave show, Jim Gray, a brave show, well worth the hazard of the journey."



"But saw you not the commander from Virginia?"

"General George Washington? No; but I am told that those of our people who understand the art of war-

fare believe he will do great things when it so be that the army is in fit condition."

"Will he attack the British soon?"

"That I know not. I saw no evidence of a move, and was told that much time must pass before our army would be worthy the name."

Jim would have asked more questions, so eager was he to learn of the doings in Cambridge, but that the night was rapidly giving way to the day.

It had been his desire to accompany Amos when the latter set out to carry to General Artemas Ward a message which had been entrusted to him by Master Revere, the goldsmith, but when the journey was begun it seemed more likely one could make the venture in safety than two, therefore he remained at home rather than imperil the undertaking.

Now, however, it seemed necessary he should curb his curiosity because the new day had come, and shortly the masters of Boston would be abroad in their coats of red.

It was probable that two lads found on the street at such an hour would be questioned more closely than might be pleasant, particularly if it was learned they were members of a certain band, or party of six, who prided themselves upon the name of "Signal Boys."

Therefore it was Jim held his peace, and Amos set about pulling the skiff from the water up into the thicket where, as could be seen, she had been secreted many a time before.

"You are to come to my home," Jim Gray said, when

the task had been performed. "Since Lord Percy has your name as one who threatens to disturb the peace and dignity of the king, it is not thought wise you should go to your father's house, and he himself has said what I now tell you."

"But are you not also suspected of being one of the Signal Boys?"

"That I cannot say; but it does not seem likely, otherwise he who gave information concerning you would have made mention of the fact."

Then the two, fearing to set out by the nearest course and through the frequented streets, crossed over near about the windmill to the shore of the mill pond. From there they traversed Boling Green to Cold Lane, and thence through Hanover to Cross Street.

They were hardly more than arrived, and Jim had not yet time to explain to his mother how he passed the night, when Chris Gore, the lad who had been wounded by Richardson, the informer, in front of Master Theophilus Lillie's shop five years before, burst into the house without the formality of a summons at the door.

Chris was ever a courteous lad, and well bred; but on this morning he failed to salute Mistress Gray as he should have done, coming at once to the business which had brought him, by saying:

"It is not well you two should remain here longer. A squad of redcoats are even now searching Master Richardson's home with the thought of finding Amos, and it is said they will come here next. My father bids me say

you shall, if it so please you, hide for a time in the house which he owns on Cambridge Street, over against the windmill."

Mrs. Gray, who had already given up one son to the Cause, her eldest boy Samuel, who was shot dead on that night of the Fifth of March, 1770, listened to all Chris said, and then, instead of showing signs of alarm, gathered hurriedly into a basket such cooked provisions as had already been placed on the table.

"If it so be you cannot make your way to Cambridge this night, here is what will save you from hunger," she said, giving the basket into Amos's keeping. "Do not linger in the town longer than may be necessary."

"But surely there is no reason why we hasten away, now that Master Gore has provided us with such a brave hiding-place, and there is much work to be done by us this night, Mistress Gray."

The good woman made no remonstrance, but kissed first one lad and then the other, after which she opened the door in token that they should be gone quickly.

Once in the street Chris would have followed; but Amos checked him by saying :

"We shall find our way, and it is better you loiter around the town to learn all that may be possible, after which you shall come to visit us."

"And it is true we have work for the night?" Chris asked.

"True, lad, and now I am minded of that which you shall do at once. General Ward would know if the vessel

lately come in be one of war, or a transport. Learn that, and as much more as may be possible. Then come to us."

Chris left his comrades at the corner of Middle Street, hurrying up Hanover while they made their way rapidly down to the water-mill, and thence along the shore of the pond until arriving at Boling Green, after which there was but little danger of meeting with an enemy.

Master Gore was in front of the unoccupied dwelling, ready to give them entrance, and said, as they approached :

"I feared Christopher might not come upon you in time if I delayed him for other instructions than to seek you out, therefore hastened here to make ready against your arrival. There is within so much food as may be needed until nightfall, when I recommend that you make your way to Cambridge."

Amos explained why it did not seem well in his opinion to flee from the town so soon ; but Master Gore remonstrated strongly against lingering where it was more than possible their arrest might be compassed, until Jim Gray said, stoutly :

"We are minded, sir, to do our share in the work begun by the Signal Boys of Boston, and there would be less harm were we taken into custody than if men like you or Master Revere were, in such wise, lost to the Cause. Therefore would we remain, although not against your will."

"It shall be as you say, lad. It shall be as you say," Master Gore replied, hurriedly. "Get you in now, and

later I may hold some converse with you regarding the matter."

He opened the door as he spoke, and the boys entered the building, after which the worthy citizen and good patriot hastened away, bent on much the same errand as was his son.

There was little hardship in thus being forced to secrete themselves, thanks to the thoughtfulness of Master Gore and Mistress Gray.

The dwelling, although empty of furniture, afforded a comfortable hiding-place for boys who were not averse to any privations or suffering which might come in the line of duty, and of provisions they had sufficient for half a dozen.

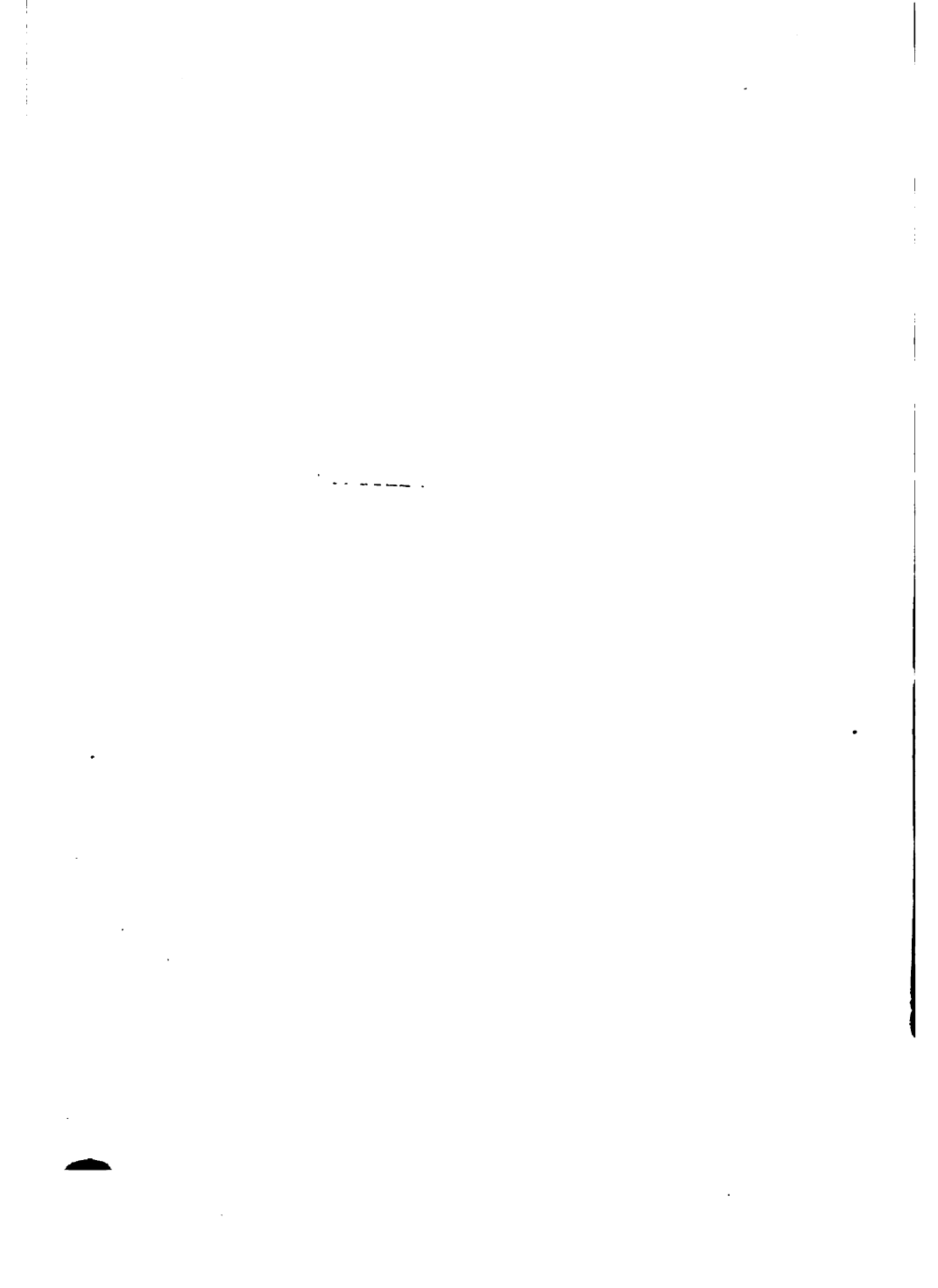
In the chamber whose window overlooked the street the lads made their headquarters, and at once began to partake of the long-delayed breakfast.

Before the meal was finished to their satisfaction, the sound of hurried footsteps from without caused Jim to look down into the street, but he had no more than time to speak to his comrade when it became necessary to open the front door, in order to check the vigorous blows which were being rained upon it.

"It is Hardy Baker," he said, while descending the stairs, "and, if he is allowed to come and go from this house at will, our place of hiding will not long remain secret."

Then Jim opened the door, and asked, sternly, as the newcomer entered, panting :





"Why do you come here, Hardy Baker, in such fashion?"

"Because the soldiers are after me," and Master Piemont's former apprentice ceased not his flight until he was in the chamber above, by the side of Amos.

Then his story was quickly told.

"The 'bloody backs' had no sooner left your home than I met Chris Gore, who told me Lord Percy had my name writ down as one of the Signal Boys, and advised me to come here without loss of time. I met Master Gray on the way, and he said that by pounding on the door you would answer the summons; therefore, all I have done has been by the command of others."

"And we were wrong in being angry, Hardy," Amos replied, gravely. "It was not seemly in us to judge so hastily."

The barber's assistant, for such he was now, had changed greatly from the barber's apprentice who had taken so active a part in the massacre of '70; but yet he was prone to swagger where there were none to threaten, and timorous when danger menaced.

Although Master Piemont had discharged him for brawling in the streets, Hardy soon found another employer, and since this last shop was not frequented by British officers, Master Baker was, in a measure, removed from political life, apparently much to his advantage.

After two years passed, and the death of little Chris Snyder was less fresh in the minds of his friends, Hardy's acquaintances, who had cast him off, renewed the comrade-

ship, and when was formed that party of lads known as the "Signal Boys," the barber's name was written among the others.

This last fugitive brought no news concerning the doings of the morning. •

He had but just ventured out-of-doors, on his way to work, when he met Chris Gore, and right willing was he to share in the breakfast so convenient at hand.

The meal finished, there was nothing to be done save await the coming of their friend, and the hours were passed by Amos and Jim in sleeping, for neither had closed his eyes during the previous night.

Not until past noon did Chris Gore enter the house, and then his work had been done.

The vessel which had lately arrived was a transport, so he reported, and my Lord Percy had not succeeded in making a prisoner of any boy in Boston town.

"Now what is to be done?" he asked, having unfolded his budget of news.

"From the steeple of the West Meeting-house we are to display our lanterns for one minute, as usual, and then show the light twice in quick succession. Had the vessel been one of war, three flashes would have told our people at Cambridge the fact."

"And is that all we have to do for the night?" Jim asked, as if in disappointment.

"It is enough, because important. Who shall say that 'twixt now and then Master Gore, or some other friend as warm in the Cause, may not have more information."

"Why do we go to the West Meeting-house?" Hardy asked. "It is not certain admittance can be gained, and we are better acquainted with some other steeple."

"It is because we have been in the others, and the red-coats will be watching them, therefore was it decided that there was less fear of discovery on Cambridge Street."

"There is nothing certain," and the smile faded from Hardy Baker's face. "Once the 'bloody backs' learn where we are working, our race has been run, for General Gage is bound to know the meaning of a light in the steeple."

"Even though *we* should be captured, there are plenty in the town to take our places, and until General Washington gains possession of Boston, I warrant you those at Cambridge will have timely news of everything which may happen," Amos Richardson said, stoutly, and Hardy was the only member of the party who appeared seriously disturbed.

He knew beyond a peradventure that now since his name was among those to be apprehended, arrest was almost certain to follow within a few days, if he remained in the town, and it would have pleased him better had Amos proposed that, after this night's work, they cross over to the American camp.

And that which was in his mind he spoke, urging, as a reason for relinquishing the work voluntarily begun, that it was better they serve in the army among their friends, than be consigned to the Bridewell.

“We cannot hope to stay even in this refuge very long without being discovered, and it is time we took care of ourselves. I do not want to show the white feather, nor would I speak of leaving town, but for the fact that, at the best, we have only a few days more here, and can no longer be of as much service as some others.”

And Amos replied, sternly :

“We shall send out the signals to-night, to-morrow night, and the next night, if it so be possible, doing all in our power so long as we remain free ; but we shall never run away, Hardy, while there is work to be done, lest those who have called us the Signal Boys of Boston town laugh us to scorn.”

CHAPTER II.

A PRISONER.

ALTHOUGH the barber's assistant was not a particularly brave lad, there is no reason why he should be painted more timorous than he really was by nature, and, therefore, just a word as to why his fears had been aroused.

Taking pattern after their elders, certain boys of Boston town had, immediately after the siege began, devised a rude system of signalling to such of their comrades as were with the American Army near about.

The value of this means of communication was speedily recognised, and probably first utilised, by Colonel Knox, who had left his bookstore to do whatsoever lay at his hand for the good of the Cause, and thus, ere the British had been shut up in Boston four weeks, the Signal Boys were sending out information which, at times, was of no slight importance to the besiegers.

During the first fifteen or twenty days signalling from the steeples of the churches was a diversion rather than a work of danger ; but once the enemy began to understand what was going on in his midst, every effort was made to apprehend those who were holding communication with the "rebels."

So secretly had the British officers pursued their inves-

tigations, that neither the Signal Boys nor their friends were aware of what was being done until Lord Percy had in his possession the names of several who had been engaged in this work, and had completed his preparations for making them prisoners.

His failure on this particular morning was due to the fidelity of Pleasant Saunders, an old negro servant who had formerly been in the service of Master Gore, Christopher's father, and was now acting as butler to his lordship, by virtue of a military order from General Gagé himself.



Thus, knowing that the members of the association, even though boys, were considered such dangerous enemies of the king that an officer so high in command as Lord Percy had been charged with the

task of taking them into custody, Hardy Baker was beginning to believe he had embarked in altogether too dangerous a venture.

It was too late, now his name appeared among those proscribed, to take such backward steps in the matter as would admit of his remaining in Boston, and he had but faint sympathy with Amos Richardson's bold avowal.

During the remainder of this day, the fugitives, for so they were in fact, could do no more than stay in hiding, keeping careful watch through the windows, and expect-

ing each moment to see a squad of soldiers coming down the street to make them prisoners.

They were happily disappointed in this last, however, and when the sun had set Hardy's courage revived, but not in so great a degree as to admit of his looking forward to the work of the evening with anything at all approaching pleasure.

"Our signals are to be made immediately after the hour of nine, and we may be delayed in gaining an entrance to the meeting-house," Amos said, when the time was near at hand.

"Who is to be left here?" Hardy asked, in what he intended should be a careless tone.

"There is no reason why any one should stay, unless it so be," Amos added, stepping a few paces nearer the barber's assistant, "your heart fails you."

"Why should you say that?" and Hardy spoke impatiently. "Some person ought to be left on guard here to learn if this place of hiding be discovered, and surely one can flash a signal without a dozen to aid him."

"Then you may remain as sentinel, if it so be you please, although, so far as danger is concerned, I question whether you be any more safe here than in the steeple of the West Meeting-house."

"It was not of possible danger I thought; but of the good of the Cause," Hardy replied, beginning to waver in his desire, now it was suggested that he might not be secure in the place of refuge. "I am willing to go forth, if it so be there is work for me to do."

“Better stay where you are, lest your timorousness increase our danger,” Chris Gore said, impatiently, and, without further parley, the three lads descended the stairs to the street entrance.

Here Amos halted an instant to say to the self-elected guardian of the building :

“We will lock the door and take the key with us, so there may be no delay if it chances we need to enter in a hurry.”

“In that case it will be impossible for me to get out.”

“There is no reason why you should wish to do so. If peradventure the soldiers come this way, your only hope of being undiscovered is to remain here quietly.”

“And then they might catch me like a rat in a trap.”

“Which would be no worse than if they shot you down while running, and such would be the case were you to flee at their approach.”

Then Amos motioned for his comrades to go outside, and, heeding not the remonstrances the barber's assistant would have made, he followed, locking the door behind him.

“It is well you have made a prisoner of Hardy, otherwise, at the first glimpse of a redcoat, he would take to his heels,” Jim Gray said in a low tone as they hastened up the street. “Now that we are really in danger, it were better for us Hardy was in the camp at Cambridge, for we well know how much mischief he can do unwittingly.”

“At least he is safe till we get back, if it so be nothing goes wrong with us this night,” Chris Gore replied ; “and

should Lord Percy fail to put his hands on us 'twixt now and morning, we had best let the timorous barber make his way to Cambridge without delay."

To this the others assented by their silence, and as the three went up the street, halting now and then, to make certain of avoiding a party of soldiers when footsteps were heard in the distance, each said to himself that the time had come when it would be better if Hardy Baker was no longer an active member of the association.

Now, in order that all the events of this evening may be more clearly understood, it is necessary we leave the three Signal Boys on their way to the West Meeting-house, and return to the barber's assistant, who was destined at this time, as he had once before, to play a prominent part in the undoing of others.

Immediately he was alone Hardy began to realise that it would have been more pleasant, even though perhaps more dangerous, had he accompanied his comrades.

This remaining alone in the unfurnished house, every apartment of which seemed, in the darkness, to be peopled with ghostly attendants, where rats in the wainscoting scurried hither and thither with as much noise as half a dozen men might have made, was more terrifying than any venturing in the open air could have been, and, but for the fact that Amos had made him prisoner, he would have run out to join his comrades almost immediately after their departure.

There was in his mind for an instant the idea of making an exit through one of the windows, and then came the

knowledge that he would be taunted with cowardice, if anything of the kind was done, causing him to dismiss the thought at once.

The noise of his footsteps, as he walked to and fro over the bare floor, caused him yet more alarm, and crouching near the window, where could be had a view of the street, he waited impatiently the return of his comrades ere they had hardly set out.

The moments passed like hours, and when it seemed as if midnight must be close at hand, the tramp of many feet in the distance increased his fears until he was in a frenzy of terror.

Nearer and nearer came the heavy tread which told that armed men were approaching, until finally Hardy could see on the street below a squad of soldiers led by a single officer.

Now it was no longer possible for him to act intelligently.

In his mind was but the one thought — that the place of refuge had been discovered and these men were coming to make him prisoner.

He forgot Amos's warning that it would be more dangerous to flee than remain quietly in the building; he gave no heed to the fact that it might be possible these redcoats had some other destination; he was conscious of nothing save the desire to escape.

In such a panic of fear as to be literally unconscious of his movements, the barber's assistant ran hurriedly down the stairs into what had been the kitchen of the dwelling,

and, flinging open the shutter with a clang which must have been heard many yards away, leaped out.

There was in his mind a vague idea that, by making his way across the open country to West Hill, he might escape those whom he believed were his pursuers, and this he unconsciously acted upon.

Even if the redcoats had had no idea there might be an enemy to the king in this apparently unoccupied building, the suspicions of the officer in command of the squad could not fail to have been aroused by the banging of the shutter, as it was thrown open hurriedly, even though he had not seen the barber's assistant leap through the window and dash wildly across the yard.

Hardy had not taken more than a dozen strides when he heard the command, and in his frightened ears it sounded as loud as the discharge of a cannon:

“Halt, or we fire!”

Still he continued the flight, and after the briefest pause came the words in the same loud tone:

“Make ready! Aim!”

Hardy halted as if suddenly turned into stone.

His knees literally shook beneath him while he waited, without turning, fearing to face his enemies, until they had surrounded him.

“Where were you going?” the lieutenant asked, sharply.

“Nowhere, sir,” Hardy replied, tremulously.

“Who remains in that house?”

“No one, sir.”

The officer came nearer his prisoner, raised the lad's face by the chin until he could distinguish his features even in the gloom, and asked :

“Are you not a barber in this town?”

“No — no — sir,” Hardy faltered, and it may be he thought in this wise no lie had been spoken, since he was only an assistant.

The lieutenant looked at him an instant longer; and then, having detailed one to guard the prisoner, gave orders to his men that they surround the building.

The door was forced open. A search of the house was made, and, as a matter of course, sufficient found therein to show for what purpose it had been lately used.

Once he was in the midst of the squad and being marched up Cambridge Street, Hardy Baker was in such an agony of terror as to be hardly conscious of his movements.

There was in his mind the thought that the officer recognised him as one of those whom Lord Percy intended to arrest, and a well-defined picture of the gallows, such as he had seen a man hanged upon but two days previous.

Before the squad arrived at Sudbury Street the prisoner was in such a condition of collapse that it was absolutely necessary the soldiers on either side should support him, and it is a question if Hardy knew, even though well acquainted with the neighbourhood, that he was marched to Master Green's mansion on Pemberton Hill, where Lord Percy had taken up his abode.



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When the squad was halted in front of the building and the officer entered to make his report, the prisoner heard, as does one in a dream, a soldier inquire of his comrades the time, and the latter replied :

“A quarter after eight.”

There was in Hardy's mind the idea that it was past eight o'clock in the morning, for it did not seem to him possible that less than twelve hours had elapsed since his comrades left him.

“Quarter after eight!” the soldier repeated. “These Signal Boys are slippery customers, it seems. In fourteen hours' marching hither an' yon we have succeeded in taking only one, and he a poor specimen of the others, if I am any judge.”

“Most likely the rest have slipped over to the rebel camp, and this fellow would have been wise had he done the same.”

How fervently the barber's assistant wished he had followed his inclinations during the afternoon, for, in such case, he would have been free and among friends at this time, instead of standing, as he firmly believed, within the shadow of the scaffold.

After a while — whether it was five minutes or half an hour Hardy could not have said — the officer came down out of the mansion, and when some word of command had been given, the prisoner was marched between two soldiers up the steps, past an armed sentinel, and into a room where were half a dozen or more officers seated around a table on which were cards, money, and wine.

The youngest of these partially turned in his chair when the prisoner was ushered in, and putting a glass to his eyes with an air of affectation, scanned the lad carelessly, while he asked of the lieutenant .



“Is this one of those roisterers who have called themselves the Signal Boys?”

“Yes, your lordship. He is a barber who, as it is said, a few years ago dared to demand in the open street payment of a bill from one of his majesty’s officers.”

“So? An insolent rebel, is he? Well, I dare say he

will be more civil when we get through with him. What is his name?"

"Tell his lordship your name, thou traitorous barber!"

"Hardy Baker, an' so please you, sir," the prisoner replied, in a voice that gave good evidence of his terror.

Then Lord Percy asked concerning where he had been taken, and the lieutenant gave the details of his arrest, whereby the prisoner learned that, had he remained quiet in the house, as Amos advised, he would not have been apprehended, for the squad was simply patrolling the street in the hope of finding one of the Signal Boys, but with no idea as to where they had taken refuge.

"Of course we shall hang him," Lord Percy said, addressing his companions, "if it so be he does not do what is possible to save his neck from a stretching," and then, turning his head slightly towards Hardy, he asked: "Who are your comrades in this work of sending information to the ragamuffin crew at Cambridge?"

It must be said, in Hardy's behalf, that there was no real idea of treachery when he gave the information.

He had heard as if in thunder tones the statement that he would be hanged, and in his mind was but one thought — to save his own life, no matter at what cost.

Therefore it was he replied as promptly as his trembling lips would permit, giving the names of all those who called themselves Signal Boys, and this done, Lord Percy asked:

"Where are they now?"

"At the West Meeting-house, sir."

"Gone there to signal again to the rebels in Cambridge?"

"If it please you, sir."

"What information have they to send?"

His lordship spoke in a less severe tone, and the frightened barber had a faint hope that he might be appeasing his enemies, therefore promptly gave the information.

"Surely the rebels must be hungering for news if they take so much trouble concerning the coming of a transport," one of the officers said, with a laugh, and Lord Percy questioned his prisoner as to how the Signal Boys expected to gain entrance to the church.

This, as a matter of course, the terror-stricken barber could not answer, and so made reply.

"Give me the information I require, or your neck shall not be saved from the halter," and once more Lord Percy spoke in a threatening tone.

"I can't, sir, indeed I can't!" Hardy wailed. "Amos had no idea of how it might be done, therefore set out early lest he might be delayed."

"Was there any particular time at which the signal was to be made?"

"As soon after nine as possible," Hardy made answer, and his story was now fully told, for he knew absolutely nothing more.

He had in his terror played the traitor towards his comrades, and received but little credit therefor, because all

present believed he was withholding some essential information.

Lord Percy troubled himself to move his chair so far as to permit of his facing the trembling lad while he threatened, but the poor barber could do no more than beg piteously for mercy, as he repeated again and again that he had told everything within his knowledge.

“He is not only a traitor to the king, but to his comrades,” one of the officers said, with a contemptuous glance at the prisoner; “and according to my idea, Percy, you had better dismiss him. He is offensive to the sight.”

The hope which Hardy had entertained, that by giving information against his friends he might purchase his own safety, was dashed by these words, and, before Lord Percy could make reply, he burst forth in prayers and entreaties, pledging himself to do anything, however base, if thereby his life could be saved.

“Clap your hand over that fellow’s mouth, else he will deafen us,” one of the officers said, petulantly, and the soldier who was guarding the prisoner obeyed without hesitation.

Then, when it was no longer possible for the terrified boy to make any outcry, Lord Percy gave instructions to the lieutenant concerning the work to be done.

“Take with you so many men as may seem sufficient, seeing to it that your force be not too small, and go to this meeting-house in such manner that the rebel spawn shall be surprised, for now has come the time when they can be captured with but little trouble. We will make

certain on the morrow that there be no chance for others to communicate in like manner with the ragamuffins at Cambridge; but to-night it is your duty to make prisoners of all those whom this young traitor has mentioned."

Then his lordship turned to the table once more, intent only upon continuing the interrupted game of cards, and even though it had been possible for Hardy to speak, he must have understood that further entreaties would be in vain. No member of the company appeared to be conscious of his existence.

Not until the prisoner had been conducted from the house did the soldier release his hold, and then Hardy was literally incapable of speech.

He realised for the first time, perhaps, of what base act he had been guilty, and also understood that the treachery would avail him nothing.

"Take him to the prison on Queen Street, and see to it that you loiter not on the street, lest a rescue be attempted," the lieutenant said, sharply, to the two men who had guarded Hardy during the interview. "Give orders that no person whatsoever have speech with him, except by Lord Percy's permission, and when that is done return here at once, for time presses."

This command was obeyed without delay, and just before they were arrived at the gloomy-looking building Hardy found his tongue sufficiently to ask:

"Think you his lordship will do me harm after all I have told him?"

"It is to be hoped so," one of the soldiers replied.





roughly. "I can look upon an honest enemy to admire him; but for a traitor I have no stomach. Were I in Lord Percy's place you should have been shot off-hand—or hanged, which is a more fitting ending for one of your kidney."

And the second soldier added :

"I question if, among these lads who call themselves 'Signal Boys,' we had found another so willing to betray his comrades."

"I but answered the questions his lordship asked, as would any one who stood in danger of death," Hardy said, tremulously.

"Then had all the lads of Boston town better keep their noses out of this revolt, for he who is so cowardly in the face of death as you, should not try to do a man's work."

For the second time in his life did Hardy Baker realise how much of evil it is possible to do when one has only self in mind, and this knowledge but added to his woe.

It was as if he had set out on a journey which could end only at the scaffold, when a heavily barred door was swung open and the soldiers literally thrust him into the building.

Then was he forced to hear the opinion which the men had of him, as they gave instructions to the turnkey, and that official, never prone to deal gently with rebels, was especially harsh while conducting the lad down the stone paved floor to the noisome cell from which he might never emerge save to go to a disgraceful death.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAST SIGNAL.

ALTHOUGH the three lads, who set out from the unoccupied house on Cambridge Street bent on sending the news which was expected at the American camp, had no thought Hardy Baker might play the traitor, they knew full well his courage could not be depended upon, and, therefore, were more secure in mind because he had been left behind.

It was reasonable to suppose the work could be performed on this night in comparative security, for thus far the West Meeting-house had not been used as a signal-station, and it was not probable the enemy would keep it under surveillance.

“Once we are on the inside, but little more than five minutes will be required for the work,” Amos said, as the three went cautiously forward, meeting no one who questioned their purpose in being abroad, and Chris Gore asked :

“Do you know if the doors are locked?”

“They are likely to be ; but I’m told the windows are seldom closely barred, and it should not be a hard task to make our way through one of them.”

“Suppose there had been other information, how could you have given it?”

“That we might not do; but by waving the light to and fro four times our friends would know that something of importance had been learned. Master—I mean Colonel Knox has promised me he will make up a system of signals whereby we may send much news in a short time, and with no other tools than lanterns.”

“Providing that ‘short time’ be allowed us,” Jim Gray said, with a laugh. “But if it so be that Lord Percy has our names, and authority from General Gage to compass our arrest, I doubt if we Signal Boys will have the opportunity to do much more in this line.”

“We should be able to devise some other means of getting word to Cambridge,” Chris said, thoughtfully. “Amos did not find it difficult to come and go in a boat.”

“Ay, that may be done at certain times, and if one awaits his chance; but we could not get news to the camp quickly, for it might be necessary to linger four and twenty hours before such a voyage could be made. Now if—”

Amos did not conclude the sentence, for at that instant the measured tread of soldiers could be heard in the distance, and the Signal Boys made haste to secrete themselves in a convenient garden.

Here amid the shrubbery they remained silent and motionless as the squad went by, and when it was safe to speak Jim said, in a whisper :

"They are going towards Master Gore's house. Think you it is known we took shelter there?"

"That cannot be, else they would have come sooner. Now we must keep strict watch for their return, lest by displaying signals while they are at this side the meeting-house we make known our new place of working."

"You two can go ahead, and I will stay here," Chris said. "It may require much time to effect an entrance, and by leaving me on guard there will be nothing to prevent your attending to the task at once."

"It is a good plan," Amos replied, approvingly, as he came out from his place of concealment. "Do not leave this spot until they have come back, and then you will find us near the big door. We'll stay there, however easy the entering may prove to be."

Feeling secure because of this sentinel, whom both could trust so implicitly, Amos and Jim pressed forward until they stood within the shadow of the church.

It was yet early in the evening, and there were many idlers on the street, therefore the lads found it necessary to move with the utmost caution, lest suspicion be aroused.

Fortunately for their purpose, it was not difficult to enter the meeting-house at will.

One of the shutters on the west side was unbarred and the window open, as it had been left, most likely, by the care-taker, for the better ventilation of the building, and Amos said when they were come to it:

"This is our road, and there is no need to search further, for it is as easy to climb in here as to walk

through the door. Now it only remains to wait for Chris."

The two were lying on the ground under the shadow of the building when their comrade returned, and his report was such as to inspire them with confidence that they were in no danger of being molested.

"The redcoats have gone back, and had with them a prisoner. At first I feared it might be Hardy, but the fellow reeled to and fro as he walked, therefore must have been a drunken brawler."

"There is little danger of Hardy's falling into their hands this night, unless, perchance, one of our own friends betrays us. He is safe inside the house, and I warrant you that suits him better than taking part in a work which may lead us to the Bridewell."

There was no reason why the lads should make haste, now they were arrived and had learned that entrance to the building could be had without difficulty; therefore the three loitered around the outside of the church, taking good care to remain within the shadows, until the hour of nine was near at hand.

Then Chris Gore ran home for the lantern, he having been appointed light-keeper of the association, and when he was returned the lads began operations.

Amos, as leader of the Signal Boys, went first, and when he had clambered through the window his comrades waited for him to give the command to follow.

Five minutes later he thrust his head and shoulders out from between the shutters, saying, in a low tone :

"Everything is in proper shape, and the way to the steeple is open. Look to it that there are none in the street when you come through."

The lantern was passed to the leader; Jim Gray scrambled on to the ledge of the window, giving Chris a hand up once he was in a secure position himself, and then the shutters were partially closed as before.

Amos led his comrades to the entrance of the steeple, and, making their way by sense of touch rather than of sight, the lads climbed up, up, up, until they were looking down from a lofty height upon the twinkling lights of the town.

It was possible to see the cluster of lights in the distance which marked the location of the American camp, and Amos, to while away the moments which must pass before it was time to flash the signal, did his best at pointing out the quarters of the different troops.

"We shall be wearing the uniform before many months go by," he said, in conclusion. "When General Washington has taken Boston from the redcoats there will be no need of Signal Boys, and we may enter the ranks, where lads of our age belong."

"It appears to me that we shall not be allowed to con-



tinue at this work many days longer, however much such service may be needed by our friends, and who shall say we will not be wearing a uniform when our people make an attack on the town? It will be even a braver battle than that of Breed's Hill, and we should be in it," Chris Gore said, thoughtfully, as, with his chin in his hand, he gazed across the expanse of water, which looked black as ink in the night, towards the lights of the patriot camp.

"I see no good reason why we may not continue the work yet many days," Amos replied. "Even though Lord Percy has our names as dangerous lads, who are to be arrested at the first opportunity, we are yet at liberty, and it will be our own fault if we fall into his lordship's clutches. Hark! There goes nine of the clock, and now stand by for the signal which shall tell that our people are waiting to hear from us."

Crouching on the floor Chris Gore soon succeeded in striking a light, and was ready with the lantern at the instant Jim Gray cried, excitedly :

"I see it! I see it! Over there, on what appears to be the high land, is a flame that moves to and fro!"

Amos stood on the sill of the tiny window in the steeple, that he might thrust the lantern far out when the signal was given, and all regardless of the fact that his form was marked boldly against the sky.

"That is it! Give me the lantern, Chris."

Jim stepped aside to allow young Gore an opportunity to approach, and, as he did so, involuntarily glanced down on the street.

"The soldiers! The soldiers!" he cried, sharply. "They must have seen you, Amos, and — they are marching directly towards this meeting-house! Come down, Amos, it will be a narrow squeak if we manage to give them the slip!"

"The signal shall be sent, even though they were coming up the ladder at this moment!" Amos replied, stoutly, and, leaning yet further out, he swung the lantern boldly, regardless that British eyes, whose owners were intent on his capture, could see every movement.

The lantern was raised once, and then brought behind the woodwork, while a cry of admiration could be heard from the street below, telling that others, besides the soldiers, had become aware of what was being done.

Again the light flashed out, and a roar of voices was heard, mingled with the sharply uttered words of command from the officer in charge of the troops.

Neither Jim nor Chris had offered to make so much as a move towards effecting an escape; they would not take a single step in the direction of the ladder until Amos was free to follow.

"Now get on, lively!" the leader cried. "We must be out of the steeple before the redcoats are inside the building. An they overlook the window, we may have some time to care for ourselves."

A heavy blow on the outer doors of the building caused the flooring to tremble beneath them, and Chris cried, gleefully:

"The simples are thinking of battering a passage

through stout oaken planks, and, before that can be done, we shall have time to turn ourselves around properly!"

"Don't count too certainly on their stopping there. I warrant you we shall find a redcoat and a musket at every window!" Amos said, as he urged his comrades on. "I am in doubt whether it will be safe to make our way out immediately, even though the opportunity be given us."

"We must make the attempt, or allow them to catch us at their leisure."

"It would be no leisurely task if we played at hide and seek here in the loft," Jim said, with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Ay, but they'd have us in the end, and I'm not minded to furnish sport for the 'bloody backs.'"

"We must try the windows, and make a bold dash," Amos said, hurriedly. "It is likely at least one will be taken, but that is better than for all three to fall into his lordship's clutches. Once we start there is to be no halting, unless they run us into a corner."

By this time the boys were on the main floor of the building, near the entrance where the soldiers were trying to open a passage.

The blows came fast and furious, delivered with such weight that it was certain the redcoats had something in the form of a battering-ram; but the stout oaken doors yielded not, and Amos said, grimly, as he paused for an instant, swinging the lantern here and there, in order to see the barrier more plainly:

“If the Britishers do not get at us until they have broken their way through at this point, we are likely to have our liberty for a long while yet.”

“It strikes me it would be wiser if we spent our time near the window by which we entered,” Jim Gray said, and if he had any fear as to the result, no signs of it were apparent in either his voice or manner.

“There is one thing about you, Jim, that I always liked. You ever have an eye to the main chance, and seldom forget anything which is important should be remembered,” and Amos hastened to the window, followed by both his companions.

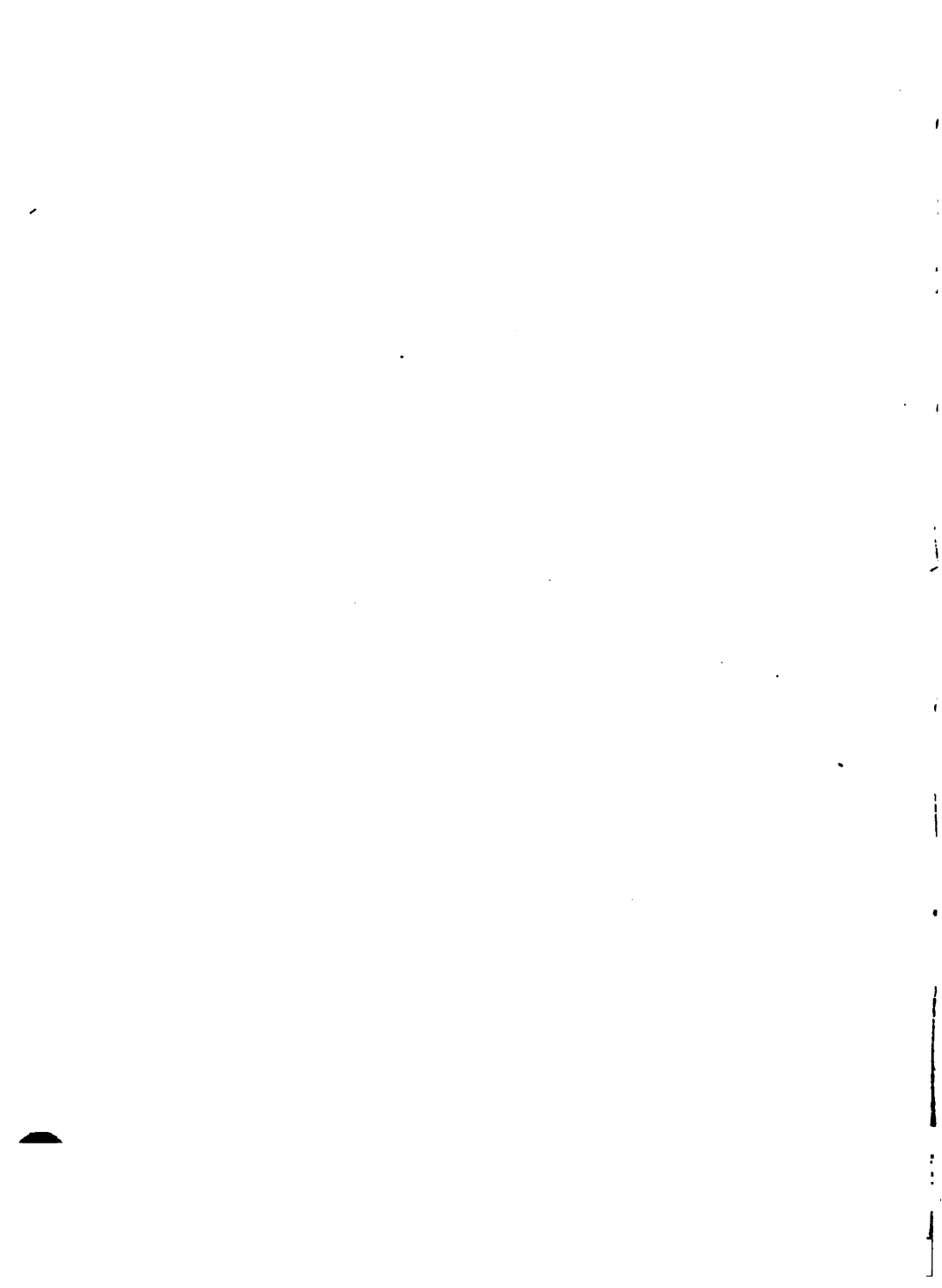
The shutters remained as they had been left after the boys entered, — open not more than two or three inches, — and just outside could be seen a gleam of steel, telling that one of the redcoats guarded that way of escape.

Amos, handing the lantern to Chris, stole softly forward, and, in a twinkling, had closed and barred the shutter, saying, as he did so :

“I reckon the fellow outside knew it was open, but, because no orders had been given for him to make a report, held his peace. If all the British officers in Boston town were as thick-headed as is he who has come to make us prisoners, there would have been no such desperate fighting as was had there.”

“When three lads are surrounded by those who count on capturing them, it strikes me it would be better they should try to form some plan of action, rather than spend their time mooning as to the good or bad qualities of the





officer who has charge of the matter," Chris Gore said, grimly. "One would think that, by closing the shutter, we had made ourselves secure."

"So we have, for the present, according to my way of thinking," and, holding the lantern high above his head, Amos made a tour of the building, for the purpose of learning if all the shutters were fastened. "It will be some time before the redcoats succeed in gaining an entrance."

"Even though they could be kept out until morning, how might it work to our advantage? We must finally be taken if we remain here, and it would be better that we try to hit upon some plan of giving them the slip."

"Ay, Jim, so it would, and you shall say what way promises fair chance of success. There is doubtless a sentinel at every window, and a dozen or more at the outer doors. Even though we formed a hundred plans, I am of the mind that not one would give us freedom."

"Then you are content to remain here until they shall gain an entrance?"

It was some moments before Amos replied, for just then the tumult in the street burst out afresh, and the blows on the door ceased suddenly.

That a large number of citizens had been attracted to the place there could be no question; to judge from the shouting, cheering, and hooting, one would have said several hundred were assembled, and the fact that the Britishers had ceased their efforts caused a hope to spring up in Jim Gray's mind.

“The people are assisting us — perhaps they have made an attack upon the soldiers! If we were where a view could be had of the outside we might see a way to get clear.”

“Even though there should be a pitched battle between the citizens and the redcoats, I question if it would avail us much, for, in event of trouble, the officer in charge will send for more troops, rather than allow himself to be beaten.”

The battering at the door was resumed.

The outcries died away to a murmur as of the sea, and if any hope of aid from the townspeople had remained in Jim's heart, it was dashed now.

Both his companions understood that Amos despaired of being able to escape, and Chris asked, as if in surprise:

“Are we not to make a dash through the window, as you first proposed?”

“While we were in the steeple, it seemed to me that might be done; but now that we are here, I can see no hope in the attempt, for it seems almost certain we should be shot down before the shutters could be swung open and we have time to leap to the ground.”

While one might have counted twenty, the Signal Boys stood silent and motionless as if resigned to the fate which seemed inevitable.

Then, although the blows upon the door continued as vigorously as ever, the shutters of the window nearest the street, on the west side of the building, were attacked, and Amos said half to himself:

"We shall not have to wait long, now that the redcoats have hit upon a sensible plan."

A splintering of wood told that the shutters were giving way under the first blows, and the prison doors seemed close at hand for these lads, who, during four weeks, had flashed intelligence from first one steeple and then another to the camp in Cambridge, despite the efforts of the enemy to prevent them.

It was as if the imminence of the danger quickened Jim Gray's wits.

Clutching his companions by the hands, excitedly, he cried :

"We are simples to stand here idle ! There is a ready way of escape, if we but take it at the proper moment !"

Amos and Chris looked around, as if expecting to see amid the gloom of the apartment something of that which had caused Jim's remark, and the latter added, hurriedly :

"There are two narrow windows at the end of the cellar, which mayhap have passed unnoticed. Why would it not be possible for us to make our way through them at the very moment the soldiers enter the building ?"

"It is a happy thought, lad, and we will try it !" Amos cried, as, turning quickly, he led the way to the entry, where, in the floor, was set a trap-door.

It was not an easy task to raise this, and the splintering of the window-shutters told that they had no time to waste.

Again and again did the boys tug at the ring set deep

in the planks, but moving it not so much as a hair's breadth, and Chris Gore said, despairingly :

"Without a bar we cannot stir it. Let us try to find something which will answer the purpose."

"There is no time for searching now," and Amos, putting forth all his strength in one more effort, succeeded in so far lifting the door that his companions could get their fingers beneath it.

Before one could have counted ten the three lads were scrambling down the rude ladder which led to what was hardly more than a shallow excavation beneath the meeting-house.

The trap was dropped in place just as the crashing of wood and shivering of glass told that the shutters had been demolished, and with all speed the Signal Boys made their way towards the rear, forced at times to crawl on their hands and knees, so narrow was the space.

Without a lantern they might not have been able to make any progress, for here and there the timbers of the flooring were within only a few inches of the earth ; but guided by the friendly light which had so often flashed a message across the bay, they were able to advance with reasonable rapidity, until having arrived at the narrow apertures which were closed only by thin wooden screens.

At the rear end of the meeting-house were no windows, therefore it was the boys believed this portion of the building would be unguarded ; yet with every care to avoid unnecessary noise they worked to remove the slight barriers between themselves and the open air.

This had hardly been done before the tramping of many feet above told that the soldiers had gained an entrance, and Amos said, as he extinguished the flame of the lantern :

“Now, lads, our liberty depends upon our heels. This



plan of escape belongs entirely to Jim, and he shall say which course we had best take.”

“I care not as to the direction, so we succeed in gaining West Hill. We must stop at Master Gore’s house for Hardy Baker, since it would be little less than treachery to leave him behind, and then, according to my way of thinking, we need to gain the American camp as soon as may be.”

“If we should be separated in the flight, remember that the first halt is to be at Master Gore’s house,” Amos whispered. “Now, Chris, you first,” and he pushed the lad towards the aperture.

It was a narrow squeeze, but a fellow may make his

body exceedingly small when his head is towards safety and his heels in danger of fire, and in a twinkling Chris stood in the open air.

Jim came next, Amos insisting on remaining until the last, by virtue of his office as leader ; and it was well he did so, for being of stouter build than his comrades, he would have stuck fast, but for the assistance they were able to give him from the outside.

The trampling of feet, as the soldiers ran to and fro within the building, together with shouts and commands, told that the redcoats were searching the meeting-house, while from the front could be heard a chorus of derisive cries, hoots, and yells from the crowd of townspeople, who were in full sympathy with the Signal Boys so sorely pressed, but yet unable to render them any assistance.

At this end of the building no guard had been placed, and the most direct course to the mill-pond appeared the safest.

The three stood with clasped hands a single instant, as if bidding each other adieu before beginning the flight so fraught with danger, and Amos whispered :

“Now, lads! Do not put forth too much speed at the first, for we must save our wind in case we should be closely pursued. I propose going to the pond, and then making our way around the shore to Master Gore’s house; but if it so be that one is taken, the others must keep on, regardless of him.”

The din inside the building increased.

The shouts of the townspeople were redoubled, for

what reason the fugitives were unable to say, but they believed it portended some change in the situation of affairs.

"Now!" Amos repeated, and he started off at a smart, though not rapid, pace.

His comrades followed, and until they were beyond the sounds of the tumult in the vicinity of the meeting-house, neither enemy nor friend was seen.

Ten minutes later the three halted at the shore of the mill-pond to regain breath, and once more they clasped hands, this time not in the way of parting, but in congratulation because of the success which had so far attended them.

"It will be an hour or more before the 'bloody backs' make up their mind that we are no longer inside the meeting-house, and during that time we should have the chance to get well away."

"There would be no question of it if we were not forced to go for Hardy Baker. Think you he would wait quietly until the morning? Then Master Gore will be certain to visit the house in order to learn if we be in it. It is dangerous for us to go there, and Hardy might come across safely to-morrow night."

"You do not mean that, Jim Gray," Amos said, sharply. "Had I made mention of it you would have been the first to say it were treachery to leave a comrade when we are bent on departing from the town. We must go to the lad, however great the danger."

"Ay, Amos, so we shall. I but spoke thoughtlessly.

We must keep faith with him, even as he would with us. Lead on, if it so be you have gained your breath."

Once more was the flight resumed, the boys skirting around the edge of the mill-pond until beyond the line of dwellings, when they turned sharply to the right, slackening not the pace until they were at the lower end of Cambridge Street.

From this point Amos advanced more cautiously, and it was well he took this precaution, for they were not yet within sight of Master Gore's house when all three halted as if at the word of command.

Pacing to and fro, as far towards the town as the eye could reach in the gloom, was a line of British sentinels, and the fugitives needed not to be told that they were keeping watch over the building which had served them as a refuge.

CHAPTER IV.

A MIDNIGHT VISIT.

IT was fortunate for the fugitives that the British officer in charge of the affair had taken such extraordinary precautions as to patrol the street for perhaps five hundred yards either side the building from which Hardy Baker had been taken, otherwise the three so lately escaped from the West Meeting-house might have walked into the very arms of their enemies.

At the moment of making the unwelcome discovery the lads were on that portion of Cambridge Street where were no dwellings, and a clump of alders bordered the north side of the way for a distance of two hundred yards or more; therefore, to find temporary concealment, it was only necessary to make their way among the foliage.

Once screened from view of those who might pass on the street, Amos, who was in advance, halted to face his comrades.

“The Britishers have either discovered our place of refuge, or suspect it is in this vicinity, and now comes the question as to how we may have communication with Hardy?”

“Think you he is still there?” Chris Gore asked.

“He surely must be, unless they have dragged him

out, for it is not reasonable to suppose that he would have left the house of his own free will."

"There is no telling what Hardy may do in the time of danger. Once grown timorous, he no longer appears capable of judging as to this or that course, but rushes blindly ahead, according to the first idea that comes into his mind."

"I grant you that, Chris, and therefore all the more certainty he is where we left him, unless the building has been searched."

"How may we know that, without putting our heads into the lion's mouth?" Jim asked, thoughtfully. "Were I in Hardy's place, I should consider it the duty of you lads to save yourselves, leaving me to play my part as best I could."

"And if we did such a thing as to abandon one of our number while it may be possible to aid him, we would be cowards, for, as Master Revere says, he who serves not his friend will not serve his country."

"But how may we know whether he be there, or a prisoner?" Jim persisted.

Amos remained silent and thoughtful while one might have counted thirty, and then said, as if seized by a sudden thought:

"One may venture unarmed where three would be discovered. You two shall stay here, or, what is better, if it so please you, try to gain the American camp, leaving me behind."

"If we were willing to do that then you might, indeed,



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count us as traitors to both friends and country," Chris replied, stoutly. "If you stay we shall remain also, even though it may not be possible for us to render any assistance. Would you attempt to gain entrance to the house?"

"Of that I am not certain. It should be possible to decide whether Hardy be there or not if we could get near enough to have a full view of the building."

"You might as well walk boldly up to the door, as to try anything like that, for if sentinels are stationed so far down the street, the house itself must be surrounded."

"That remains to be seen, and I shall soon know. Listen, and do not argue against the proposal. I will make my way around to the rear, keeping at a safe distance, and if it be impossible to learn anything there, can go on to the town and speak with Master Gore. He must be aware of what is going on this night."

"Since Lord Percy has our names, my father's dwelling will be watched with the idea I may return to it," Chris interrupted. "It would be folly to make such an attempt."

"Then I can keep on to Master Revere's. I am resolved to know whether Hardy stands in need of our aid before seeking my own safety by flight."

Realising that their comrade would not be dissuaded from his purpose, both Jim and Chris endeavoured to so far change the proposed plan as to admit of their accompanying him; but against this he had an unanswerable argument.

"One may go in safety even into the heart of the town, while three could hardly hope to pass undetected if, as is reasonable to suppose, the Britishers are on the alert for our coming."

After a spirited discussion of five minutes or more, the matter was settled as Amos had proposed, and, indeed, were all affairs arranged according to his will when, as Jim expressed it, "he took the bit between his teeth."

Amid the alders the two boys might count on being able to remain in hiding until hunger should drive them out, and both promised that, save in case of extreme danger, or absolute necessity, they would not leave the friendly shelter of the foliage for the space of four and twenty hours.

If, at the end of that time, Amos had not returned, it was to be supposed he had been taken into custody, and the two were then to make their way, as best they might, to the American camp, but under no circumstances to search for their leader.

It was this last portion of the proposition against which Jim and Chris fought most strenuously, and with good argument, for if Amos was to risk his life in hunting for Hardy, surely they would be warranted in doing the same when two of their number were missing.

"If one or the other of us comes not here within four and twenty hours, then you will know we are both in the hands of the British; therefore, it would be folly to venture into the town," Amos said, before his companions could

make further protest, and thus was the matter finally settled.

The three clasped hands, for now was the danger to one of them more imminent even than when they stood in the West Meeting-house, with the enemy battering at the door, and then, with another caution against their venturing out of the concealing foliage, Amos started on his perilous mission.

In order to approach the building from the rear, he crossed the road at this point, where he was so far from the line of sentinels that they could not be seen in the gloom, and, making a wide *détour*, stood, after half an hour or more had passed, where he could have a fairly good view of the house.

There was nothing here to tell him whether Hardy yet remained within, or if the enemy had effected an entrance.

The shutters were closed, and the door apparently remained fastened.

As he stood, surveying the scene, the tramp of sentinels was heard, and he understood that the building was guarded in the rear as well as the front, although even this fact did not give him assurance that the redcoats knew positively the hiding-place, since there were four other houses within a short distance of each other, and the line of sentinels took in all of these.

“If the Britishers have gotten so near the scent as to know we were hidden hereabouts, it is almost positive they can tell the precise location of our refuge; but, despite all that, Hardy may yet be within the building,” Amos said

to himself, as he stole cautiously across the open fields, in the direction of Beacon Hill.

During this walk he had ample time for reflection, and realised that what Chris had said was true.

It would not be wise to attempt to have speech with Master Gore at his own home.

He ran over in his mind the names of those he could trust who were likely to be best informed as to the happenings of the night, and his choice fell upon Master Revere, who, more than once during the past three weeks, had entrusted the Signal Boys with messages to be delivered from some one of the steeples.

The attempt to reach North Square would be fraught with danger, and yet perhaps in the night no more so than many another point within the town; but should he gain entrance to Master Revere's home without being discovered by the enemy, it would be possible to get the fullest information concerning that which it was important to know.

"I will take the risk," he said to himself, "and if per-adventure I am captured, it can be no worse for me than for many a good man who has fallen into General Gage's clutches on his road to the scaffold."

Having crossed the field he made his way along the street with the air of one bent on innocent business, and knowing full well he must give strict account of himself if he came upon the patrol.

But this last he did not propose doing, if it should be possible to avoid them by any amount of turning and twisting.

He knew every lane and alleyway in the town, and it would be strange indeed, so he argued to himself, if he was not able to keep at a pleasing distance from the red-coated guardians of the king's peace.

Fortune favored him in this respect, at least, for he met not half a dozen pedestrians between Beacon Hill and North Square, and only on one occasion did he have token that the patrol was near him.

Then he heard their measured tread so long in advance of their coming, that there was ample time to take refuge behind a convenient stable, and the squad passed, all unconscious that the lad they were so eager to capture was close at hand.

It was not yet midnight when he knocked cautiously at Master Revere's door, and then more loudly, because the first summons remained unanswered.

Finally, to his great relief, for he feared the soldiers might come upon him at any instant, the window in the upper story was raised, and a night-capped head thrust out.



"Whom do you seek?" was the question, in a sleepy tone, and Amos answered, softly :

"Master Revere, and as quickly as may be."

"Who are you?"

"One of the Signal Boys, an it please you, sir."

The window was lowered quickly, and as soon as the goldsmith, who did not wait to put on his wearing apparel, could run down-stairs, the street door was opened.

"Enter, lad, and quickly," he said, nervously. "Who may you be?"

It would have been necessary to ask this question of his most intimate friend, for there was no light within the house, and neither visitor nor host could distinguish the other's countenance.

"Amos Richardson, sir."

"Why are you here, lad?" and Master Revere gave token of excitement. "Are you not one of the three who escaped from the West Meeting-house this night?"

"I am, sir; Chris Gore and Jim Gray were with me. I had but lately come from the camp at Cambridge, and was there charged by Colonel Knox to signal whether the newly arrived ship was a transport, or vessel of war."

"But having once escaped from the foe, why did you return to the town?"

"We had not fairly left it, sir. One of our number yet remains where we lay in hiding during the day, and it was our duty to seek him out. There are sentinels near about the house, and I have ventured here to learn if you know aught concerning Hardy Baker?"

“He was captured, while leaving Master Gore's house, by the patrol, who were not at the time seeking him. From all I can gather, his own folly has led to his downfall, and what is worse, lad, I am told he gave Lord Percy all the information in his power concerning those with whom he was connected.”

“The traitor!” Amos exclaimed, hotly.

“Ay, lad, that is the correct term; yet are you at fault because it was in his power to do such a thing. If I remember rightly, you had good reason to doubt him some years ago, and be he man or boy who has once been found wanting, none who are wise will again repose confidence in him.”

“It may be, sir, that Hardy is not as black as they would paint him,” Amos said, after a brief pause. “The Britishers may have spread the report to frighten us.”

“I would that were true, lad; but it is not. Some of our friends overheard a conversation between the boy and the soldiers who led him away to prison. Where are your comrades?”

Amos gave the desired information, and Master Revere said, earnestly:

“The time has now come when you can be of no service in the town, and it is your duty to leave at once, if it so be that is now within your power.”

“I see no reason why we may not depart in the same manner as I came over last night. We have a boat at West Hill, and the redcoats are not keeping sharp watch in that direction.”

"Such may have been true this day; but to-night I fear they are on the alert. It is reported to me that General Gage is in a high temper because you three lads were allowed to escape from the West Meeting-house after his troops had you, as was supposed, completely surrounded."

"If we fail to escape by that way, I know not how the matter may be accomplished," Amos said, reflectively.

Master Revere remained silent several seconds, and when he did finally speak it was to say:

"Make the effort as you have proposed, lad, and if the plan miscarries, to-morrow night go to Gee's shipyard. I will see to it that a boat be there, and peradventure we may succeed in getting you out of the town by such means."

"If we fail at West Hill, and it is possible to gain the yard, we will be there, sir, and I thank you heartily for the offer of assistance."

"In aiding you I am but aiding the Cause, lad, for you are fallen into sore straits through the effort to do good service," Master Revere replied, as he laid his hand gently on Amos's shoulder, and the lad, bowing as he had been taught to do in taking leave of his elders, went quickly out into the night once more.

Not until Amos was making his way by many a devious course through the town, dodging here into an alleyway, when he heard approaching footsteps, or skulking there in the garden of some citizen, despite the law against trespassing, when the patrol could be heard in the distance—not until then did he come to a full realisation of Hardy Baker's treachery, and the knowledge was bitter.

Save for the desire to be loyal to the barber's assistant, he, Jim, and Chris might even at that moment be well out of the town on their way to Cambridge; but now, if Master Revere's information was correct, it was not certain they would be able to take boat at West Hill, and there was very much danger of discovery in remaining in such places of concealment as might be found in the open country round about for the space of four and twenty hours before the goldsmith's plan could be carried into effect.

As he thought of this he understood also that Hardy must have disobeyed the express command not to leave the house unless obliged to do so by force, and his anger against the barber's assistant was greater on this night than it had been five years ago, when he forced him to a fair fight.

"The coward hopes to save his neck by putting ours in the noose," he said, bitterly, "and I pray he may fail in the effort."



Then after a brief pause he added :

“I will take those words back. However much he has done to our harm, I make no such wish as that. I hope he may go free, but never forget how he has treated comrades who were loyal to him.”

Then all thought of the barber's assistant was driven from his mind as the sound of footsteps warned him of the patrol's approach.

Instead of returning by way of Beacon Hill, he set out over nearly the same course pursued when he escaped from the West Meeting-house, and with the same share of success.

Although, when he left his comrades, the chances of making a tour of the town and returning in safety seemed very much against him, it had been done without serious encounter.

Jim and Chris were on the watch for his coming, as was shown when Amos stepped into the road far beyond the line of sentinels, for both came forward to meet him.

Without entering into the details of his journey, Amos repeated that which the goldsmith had told him, and during several moments his comrades could think or speak of little more than Hardy's treachery.

As was but natural, both were bitter in their denunciations, and might have spent much valuable time in useless words, had not their leader recalled them to the work in hand.

“We are far from being clear of the woods yet, even though free, and it behooves us to set out from West Hill

at once, if it so be Master Revere is not mistaken regarding the vigilance of the 'bloody backs.' Instead of talking here about what Hardy has done, we had best be putting forth every effort to save our own necks. General Gage would not be dainty in the handling of us, should we fall into his clutches this time."

Unless it should be the enemy in search of them, there was little chance of their meeting any one at this hour in the night, and the boys followed Amos as he made his way across the country in as nearly a direct line for West Hill as was possible.

The labour of travelling over such a course would be more than if they continued on to the end of the road, but there was less danger.

Not until fully two hours had passed did they arrive in the vicinity of the spot where the boat was hidden, and then much caution became necessary.

If, as Master Revere had feared, the British knew, through information given by Hardy Baker, that from this point the Signal Boys were in the custom of leaving the besieged town, sentinels would be placed along the shore, and this must be determined before any attempt was made at launching the craft.

CHAPTER V.

TURNING THE TABLES.

THE boys had come to a halt on that side of the bluff nearest the town, and deeming it unsafe to advance directly towards the water, Amos proposed that he circle around to the north, while Chris and Jim proceed in a southerly direction.

Having gained the shore, it was then their purpose to move forward cautiously until they should either meet, or, having discovered the enemy, return to the point from which they had set out.

Jim's only objection to this plan was that perhaps an hour or more might be wasted, for the morning was very near at hand.

"Unless we are away from here before the day breaks, all hope of getting to Cambridge until after four and twenty hours have passed is at an end," he said, and Amos replied :

"Ay, lad, it is true ; but if to save time we should walk into the arms of a squad of redcoats, we might never gain the American camp. Better that we stay here eight and forty hours than take too many risks."

And well it was for the Signal Boys that their leader laid himself open to the imputation of being overcautious.

The three went their ways, Amos moving stealthily even while at a considerable distance from the shore ; but Jim and Chris, eager to gain the boat in the shortest possible space of time, and doubting if the danger was as great as their comrade believed, pressed forward almost carelessly.

Instead of making a long *détour* around the bluff as prudence dictated, they shortened the distance by proceeding at an angle, thus coming upon the shore within two hundred yards of where the boat had been concealed.

Amos, as has been said, did his work in a systematic fashion, and, on arriving at the water's edge, was fully an eighth of a mile above the point he desired to gain.

Keeping well within the friendly shelter of the bushes, which grew to the very edge of the shingle, he moved with infinite care, as if knowing beyond a question that the enemy were near at hand closely watching him.

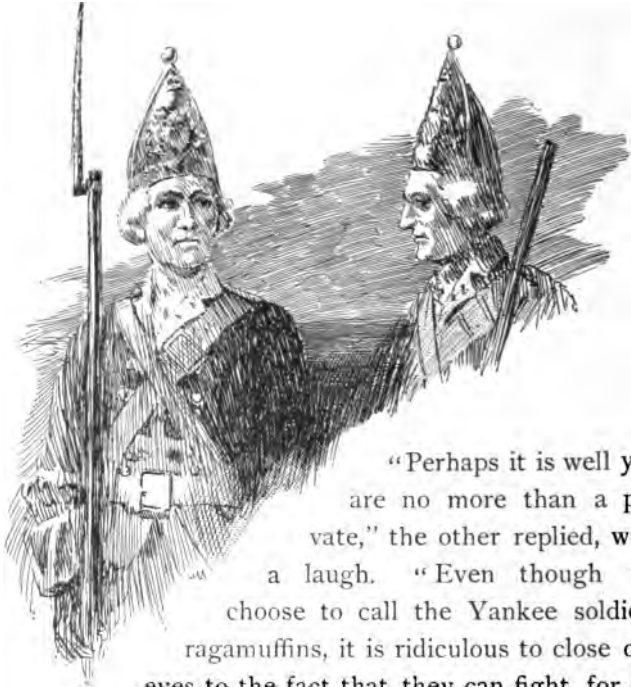
When, after perhaps twenty minutes had passed, he was arrived within a hundred yards of the hidden skiff, the sound of voices caused him to come to a standstill very suddenly.

Two men — and he had no doubt that they were British soldiers — walked leisurely along the shore, and he stood silent and motionless as a statue, hardly daring to breathe lest he should bring the enemy down upon him.

Now the strangers were so near he could hear the conversation, and there was no longer any question as to whom they might be.

“This playing hide and seek with boys is not to my

liking," one of them said, grumblingly. "For four weeks or more we have done naught else than act the part of constables. Were I in command of the army, the rebels should be driven out of Cambridge in short order."



"Perhaps it is well you are no more than a private," the other replied, with a laugh. "Even though we choose to call the Yankee soldiers ragamuffins, it is ridiculous to close our eyes to the fact that they can fight, for we got good proof of it at Breed's Hill. I have serious doubts whether General Gage could cut his way out of this town to-day."

"Then it were better we stood up and took a flogging, for how is the rebellion to be crushed while we remain shut up in a box?"

“Mayhap it never will be crushed. There are in my mind many misgivings as to the ability of the king’s forces to drive out from so vast an extent of country these people who object with arms in their hands to being taxed.”

“Now you are speaking like one distraught! His Majesty can overrun the land with troops, and will do so rather than loose his hold upon it. I am ready to do my duty as a soldier, and hope soon to be called upon, as at Charlestown; but, and I repeat it, this doing a constable’s work in arresting boys is not to my liking.”

“Yet how can it be avoided? These lads, who have sent information from the town since we were shut up in it, are performing the work of men, and must be treated as such. I warrant you, among the rebel forces many are to be found even younger than the one who was sent to prison this night.”

“If there be a baker’s dozen as ready to betray their comrades as was the fellow taken on Cambridge Street, then might we hope to have as much information regarding the movements of the Yankees as they gain concerning us.”

“Think you the lad has purchased his life by the treachery?”

“If it should prove so, then I am mistaken as to the temper of General Gage. He will swing on the scaffold as quickly as if he had held his tongue, for hark you, he gave no information, as I am told, that had not already been gained, and has sold himself without receiving the price.”

During this conversation the soldiers had passed Amos's place of concealment on their way around the shore towards the north, and at that instant the lad heard Jim Gray shouting, gleefully :

“ Hello ! Amos ! Hello ! There's no one here save our own three selves, and nothing to prevent us from starting at once ! ”

The soldiers were not so far away but that they heard the words as plainly as did Amos, who, peering out from amid the foliage, saw them turn and retrace their steps rapidly and stealthily.

To warn his comrades would be to give the redcoats notice of his whereabouts, while by remaining silent he allowed Chris and Jim to be taken prisoners.

It seemed certain that capture was inevitable either for his companions or himself, and the thought came quickly to the lad's mind that duty to the Cause demanded he should make a sacrifice.

“ It is better two escape than one,” he said to himself, and was on the point of raising an outcry when the thought came that it might yet be possible all could go free.

“ Hello ! Amos ! ” Jim cried again.

The soldiers advanced yet more rapidly.

They had passed the spot where Amos was concealed, and the lad looked hurriedly about him for something which would serve as a weapon.

Nearly one precious moment was spent before he succeeded in finding, by sense of touch, for it was so

dark amid the foliage that nothing could be seen, such a bit of wood as would serve him as a cudgel.

It was not a formidable weapon as against two muskets, yet the lad hoped that the surprise of the men on being attacked from the rear would overcome the disparity of arms, and at the worst, so he argued with himself as he ran swiftly behind them, the situation would not be more grave.

Again Jim cried out, the words dying away in an exclamation of dismay and astonishment as he saw the sentinels, who were now within twenty yards or less of where he stood.

Amos was about the same distance in the rear, his comrades not yet having seen him.

Acting upon the first impulse, Jim and Chris turned to flee, but were speedily brought to a standstill.

"Halt, or I'll fire!" one of the men cried, as he levelled his musket, while the other continued on.

Now was come Amos's time.

They must make their escape, or, if the plan failed of its purpose, all three would join the traitorous Hardy Baker in the Queen Street prison.

It was necessary to move even more stealthily than before, but yet not slacken the pace.

Everything depended upon being able to approach the soldier so close as to deal a blow with the cudgel before the fellow should be aware an enemy was near at hand.

And in this Amos was successful, thanks to the Britisher's comrade, who made such an outcry in shouting

to Jim and Chris as drowned the sound of the lad's footsteps.

The stick of wood which the leader of the Signal Boys had found amid the darkness was not a stout one, but he put all his strength into the blow, bringing the cudgel down squarely on the soldier's head with such force and precision that the fellow toppled over like a rotten branch, not so much as uttering a moan.

Seizing the musket which had fallen from the man's grasp, Amos dashed on, overtaking the second Britisher at the instant he clutched Chris and Jim by the coat-collars, dropping his musket on the ground in order to do so.

Had the soldier obeyed instructions he could not have done more to aid in his own capture.

"Right about face, and hold up your hands!" Amos shouted, and as the soldier turned in bewilderment at being thus accosted from the rear, where he had reason to believe his comrade was on the alert, the muzzle of a musket met his gaze.

Resistance would have been folly, and like a wise man he obeyed the command.

Jim and Chris were quite as much startled as was the soldier, for, until he spoke, they had not seen their comrade, and this sudden turning of the tables was bewildering.

"Don't stand there staring at me as if I was a stuffed bird!" Amos said, laughingly; "but follow back on the shore, where you will find a soldier, whom I hope has not

yet recovered consciousness, and see to it that he be bound securely."

The boys obeyed in silence, mystified by this intimation that their leader had already fought one battle, and Amos said to his prisoner :

"I don't ask you to tell anything which should be kept a secret ; but if it may be, I would like to know when you two expected to be relieved."

"Why should that be concern of yours?" the man asked, and from his tones one would have said he was in not any very great distress at thus finding himself a captive.

"If we are likely to have an hour or more at our disposal, then you will receive better treatment."

"And how do you know that I would hesitate at a lie in order to benefit myself?"

"True ; I had overlooked that, yet even now am willing to take your word."

"Our watch here was to end one hour after sunrise, and we came an hour before midnight."

"You tell me that on your honour as a soldier?"

"On my honour both as a soldier and a man."

"Then we shall have ample time in which to make our preparations. If there was danger of others coming this way, I should believe it necessary to gag as well as bind you."

"Unfortunately for us, our captain thought we two could attend to this portion of the work, and it seems he made a grave mistake, since we have allowed ourselves to

be taken prisoner by one boy. Tell me, lad, was this plan devised by you?"

"It was no plan, but an accident," and Amos explained to the prisoner how the matter was brought about.

By this time Jim came up with word that the other soldier had been bound, and Amos asked, anxiously:

"Has he regained consciousness?"

"Ay, and his temper, too," Jim replied, with a laugh. "He is making the air blue with threats, and Chris sits near by listening as eagerly as though it were a nightingale singing. It makes a big difference whether the Britisher who threatens you is master, or powerless to do mischief."

"I must ask you to submit quietly while my comrade fastens your hands behind your back," Amos said to his prisoner, paying but little attention to Jim's remark, and the soldier replied, readily:

"While you have that musket so near my head, there is little fear I shall offer resistance. What do you propose doing with us?"

"Take you to the American camp."

"Under other circumstances I should not be so much averse to the trip; but that two of us should be captured by three unarmed lads is little to our credit."

"And very much to ours," Jim said, gleefully.

"Don't crow too loudly," Amos said, seriously. "It has been an accident, and nothing more. Now take off the soldier's cross-belts and use them to bind his arms."

Once this had been done to Amos's satisfaction, he



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directed that Jim should take up the prisoner's musket, and stand guard over him, while he went back to where Chris was listening with the utmost pleasure to the second captive's angry and injudicious words.

"Look here, my man, your comrade is wiser than you, in so much as he accepts without grumbling the present position of affairs. Just now you are in our power, and harsh words will not better the situation."

"I'd like to strangle you."

"Well, you can't, so get on to your feet, and move along."

"Where are you taking me?" the soldier asked, not making any effort towards obeying.

"To where your comrade is."

"And you expect me to walk there while I am trussed up like a chicken ready for the roasting?"

Jim and Chris had done their work so thoroughly that the man was powerless to move any portion of his body save his tongue, and, unless they were willing to carry him, it was necessary the belt confining his lower limbs should be removed.

This Amos did, and, while yet continuing to threaten in the most bloodthirsty terms, the prisoner allowed himself to be assisted to his feet.

Once the two redcoats were in company, Amos made them yet more secure by binding the arms of both together, thus forcing the men to stand back to back, and in such position it was not possible they could make any very serious attempt at escape.

“Now, then, lads,” the leader said, “we must launch the boat, and it is high time, for day is near at hand.”

To bring the skiff down from its place of concealment among the bushes was neither a long nor a difficult task, and when she was afloat the two soldiers were put on board, one in the bow and the other in the stern.

Then the Signal Boys took their places, loading the light craft so heavily that she must have swamped had the wind been strong enough to ruffle the water.

Although the morning was calm, and the water placid as a mill-pond, Jim was doubtful as to whether the boat could carry such a load; but Amos put an end to his forebodings of evil by saying :

“We must either make the venture, or go into Queen Street Prison, therefore stand by with a bailing-dish, while Chris and I work at the oars. It is better to be drowned than hanged.”

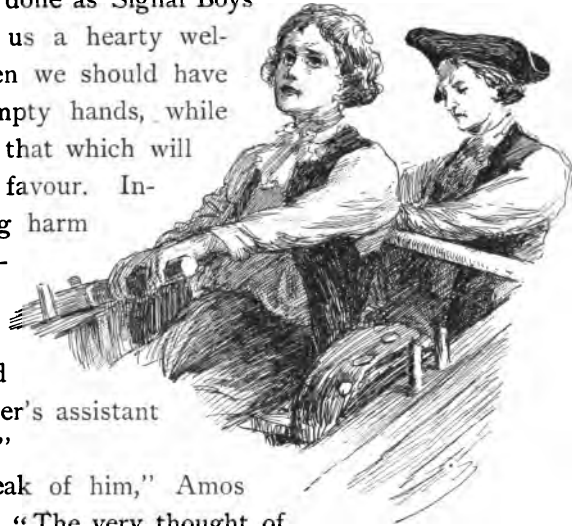
The gray light of coming dawn could be seen in the sky as the boys pushed off from West Hill, and ere the craft was half a mile from the shore the night had so nearly gone that there was every danger they might be seen and pursued, in which case capture would be inevitable.

“Put every ounce of strength on the oars, Chris,” Amos said, grimly. “It is a case of life or death with us now, for I warrant you we would not be able to escape the gallows were the Britishers to capture us after what has been done.”

“I hope I may live long enough to see you hanged!”

the angry prisoner cried, vindictively, and Chris replied with a merry laugh :

“You are likely to arrive at the age of Methuselah if that wish be granted, unless it so happen your people get sight of us very soon. Amos, we sha’n’t cut a sorry figure when we enter the American camp! I had thought what little we have done as Signal Boys would insure us a hearty welcome, but then we should have gone with empty hands, while now we have that which will win us much favour. Instead of doing harm by his treachery, I am not certain but that it is a good turn the barber’s assistant has served us.”



“Don’t speak of him,” Amos said, moodily. “The very thought of that coward makes me sick,” and the prisoner who had kept his temper interrupted :

“The comrade who betrayed you will never have an opportunity to act the traitor again, for, if I mistake not, his days on earth are already numbered.”

“That is poor satisfaction. I can find no pleasure in the thought that the fellow is to be hanged, for he was one of us, and it was only through cowardice, in the hope

of saving his own life, that he turned traitor. I would venture much, even now, to save him from such a terrible fate."

"Though you risked your life a hundred times over, it could not be done," the prisoner replied, and Chris, to put the disagreeable subject out of his mind, changed the tenor of the conversation by asking :

"Shall we make our way directly to Cambridge, or stop at the battery near Little Cove?"

"There is no reason why we should not keep on to headquarters, if it so be we are permitted," Amos replied, and before he could say more an exclamation of fear from Jim caused him to look quickly towards the shore they had just left.

"We must have been seen almost at the very moment of starting, for that boat is coming from near about the copper-works."

"She may be manned by our friends," Chris suggested, and would have ceased rowing to gaze at the oncoming boat but for Amos's stern command :

"Pay no attention to anything save your own work, Chris. A delay of even a minute now may cost us our liberty — perhaps our lives."

"There is no such good fortune as their being our people," Jim said, gloomily. "I can see the colour of their coats; but what puzzles me is how they should have known so soon what we were about."

"They are most likely the squad that was sent to Barton Point," the cheerful prisoner said, by way of explanation. "Four were detailed for that service, and if I

mistake not, went there from the Charlestown ferry-way in a boat. It begins to look as if you would not enter the American camp with flying colours after all."

"Pull, Chris, pull!" Amos cried, straining at his oar until it bent almost to the point of breaking. "It is our lives we are working for now!"

"And a mighty slim chance of saving them! Those fellows are rowing two yards to our one," Jim cried, despondently.

"Yet we have the advantage at the start, and it may be that those who man the battery at Little Cove will see us in time to put an end to the pursuit," Amos added, cheerily, but the expression on his face gave evidence of the anxiety in his mind.

Jim was in such a state of excitement that it seemed impossible he could sit still on the thwart, and moved incessantly, looking first at the pursuers and then at the land, so far away, where safety and freedom awaited them.

"Keep quiet," Amos said, warningly. "You but hold us back while twisting and turning in such fashion, to say nothing of the fact that we are liable to ship water at any moment, and our load is already as heavy as we need."

Jim sat bolt upright, as if suddenly turned to stone, and from that instant he did no more than roll his eyes from one side to the other.

He still exercised the right to use his tongue, however, and asked every few seconds as to the progress of the chase, for those who were rowing sat with their faces towards the pursuers, as a matter of course.

"They gain on us," Amos said, grimly, from time to time, and finally added, "Now they are going to shoot. Sit still, Jim, you are in no more danger of being hit than if you dodged."

The report of a musket rang out in the clear, still air startlingly distinct, and the bullet fell harmlessly into the water a dozen yards astern.

"They are not yet within range, and couldn't have done us a greater service than by that shot!" Chris cried, exultantly, while Jim asked, sharply:

"What do you mean by that? I do not consider it a favour for any man to kill me."

"Those at the battery must have heard the report, and if they shoot once again, I warrant you there will be some reply from Little Cove."

The heavily laden boat was plowing her way swiftly through the water, leaving a white wake astern; the lads at the oars were pulling desperately, the perspiration which streamed from their faces telling of the strength expended; the prisoners were exultant, and Jim ghastly pale, for he no longer had any hope they would make their escape.

One — two — three minutes passed, and Amos cried:

"They are trying it again; this time I reckon the missile will come nearer!"

Then was heard the report, and a musket-ball passed directly over the heads of the lads, buzzing ominously.

Jim bent over and paddled with his hand, as if thinking such feeble effort might accelerate the speed, and the

panting of the oarsmen told that they were well-nigh spent.

Another report, and a second ball came zip, zip, zipping along the surface of the water, giving unpleasant token that the soldiers had decreased the distance by fully one-half.

Amos no longer gazed at the pursuers, but kept his eyes fixed on the bottom of the boat, for hope had now departed, and he saw the prison and the scaffold before him.

A fourth report, and the leaden missile struck fairly the gunwale of the boat within two inches of Chris Gore's oar.

It was when the Signal Boys felt certain their capture was the same as effected, that a heavy booming sound answered the crack of the muskets, and a fervent exclamation of thanksgiving came from Amos's lips, for he knew the battery at Little Cove was taking part in the action.

"Hurrah!" Jim shouted. "I reckon the Britishers won't care to follow us much farther."

"Look out!" Amos cried, sharply, and the words had hardly been spoken when a volley was fired from the pursuing boat, the bullets striking the water close around the craft, but doing no injury.

"That is their last salute," Chris said, in a tone of most intense satisfaction, and Jim believed he might safely turn to look at the enemy.

The redcoats were hardly more than half a musket-shot away, and could have ended the chase with the

capture of the Signal Boys in five minutes more, but for the shore battery.

Now the oarsmen were pulling their boat around hurriedly, fearing another shot from the big guns, and it came before the craft was again headed towards the Boston shore.

A round-shot was pitched into the water close alongside the Britishers' skiff, so near, in fact, that the men received a thorough wetting; but it is safe to say they did not grumble at this because the greater danger had passed them by.

"I allow we shall help make your entrance to the rebel camp something in the way of a triumphal procession," the cheerful prisoner said, with a laugh. "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, as this shows, for five minutes ago I was certain we should change positions."

"I'll live to see them hanged yet," the ill-tempered red-coat cried, angrily, and then he refused to speak until after the lads had delivered him to Colonel Knox at Cambridge.

The danger was over, and it may be well to state that, on the day after the lads so happily escaped, taking with them two of their would-be captors, General Gage gave orders that the steeple on the West Meeting-house be torn down, and while this work was being done Hardy Baker went to his doom.

He suffered because of what he had done in aid of the Cause, and those who knew of his treachery remained silent concerning it; therefore the barber's assistant is

to-day numbered among the martyrs of '75, which is as Amos, Jim, and Chris would have had it.

There remains no more to be told here regarding the three Signal Boys, for they entered the American Army, serving in the artillery under the Boston bookseller, and not until those famous fortifications were erected as if by magic on Dorchester Heights did either of them have an opportunity of striking another blow at the enemy.

THE END.

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